

Background

In the wake of the Vietnam War, hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese people fled their homes, setting out in overcrowded boats across the South China Sea, vulnerable to pirates and storms. A third of them drowned. Fr Pedro Arrupe SJ, Superior General of the [Society of Jesus](#) at the time, [founded the Jesuit Refugee Service \(JRS\) in an attempt to help these Vietnamese refugees](#).



Fr Arrupe wrote to over 50 provinces of Jesuits regarding the situation, recognising that the Jesuits, then numbering 27,000 globally, were well-placed to coordinate a global humanitarian response. As conflicts broke out in Central and Latin America, southeastern Europe, and across Africa, JRS rapidly grew from helping Vietnamese boat people to helping refugees around the world. Founded in November 1980 as a work of the Society of Jesus, JRS was officially registered as a foundation on 19 March 2000 at the Vatican State.

With its headquarters based in Rome, ten regional offices and with teams working in 48 countries around the world, the JRS provides education, emergency assistance, livelihood support, social services and healthcare to **724,551 refugees** and internally displaced persons (IDPs), more than half of whom are women. At the end of 2015, **JRS employed nearly 2,000 staff members**: lay, Jesuits and other religious, offering assistance to forced migrants.

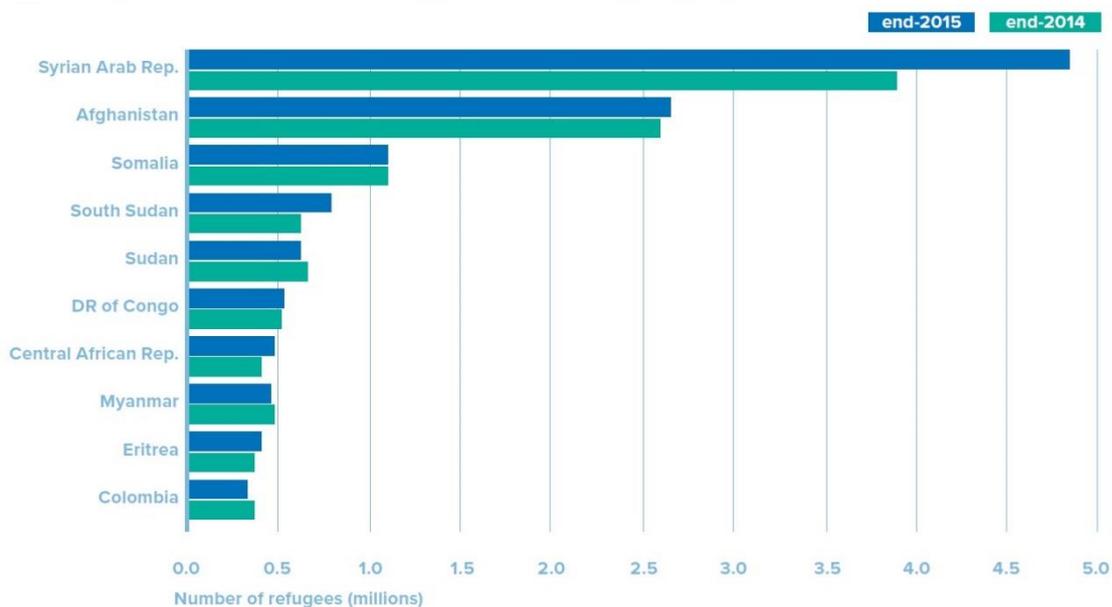
Forcibly displaced persons. When JRS was established in 1980, the number of forcibly displaced persons – refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs and stateless persons – in the world was approximately 16 million. At the end of 2015, the number of forcibly displaced persons was estimated to be about 65.3 million.

JRS believes this estimate is too conservative. It excludes millions of people who are unable to return home in safety and dignity, yet fail to fit the narrow legal definitions specified by UN conventions. For example, while the term ‘migrant’ does not necessarily connote ‘refugee’, millions of people who flee conflict, environmental, economic and political instability are denied recognition as refugees or other forms of international protection, thus officially considered undocumented migrants.

The existing UN refugee convention only include those fleeing individual persecution on the grounds of their race, religion, political opinion or membership of particular social group. In addition to ‘convention refugees’, JRS serves, accompanies and advocates on behalf of the victims of war, relentless poverty and natural disasters. JRS also serves IDPs, that is, civilians who as refugees ‘are forcibly uprooted from their homes, but who do not cross national frontiers.’

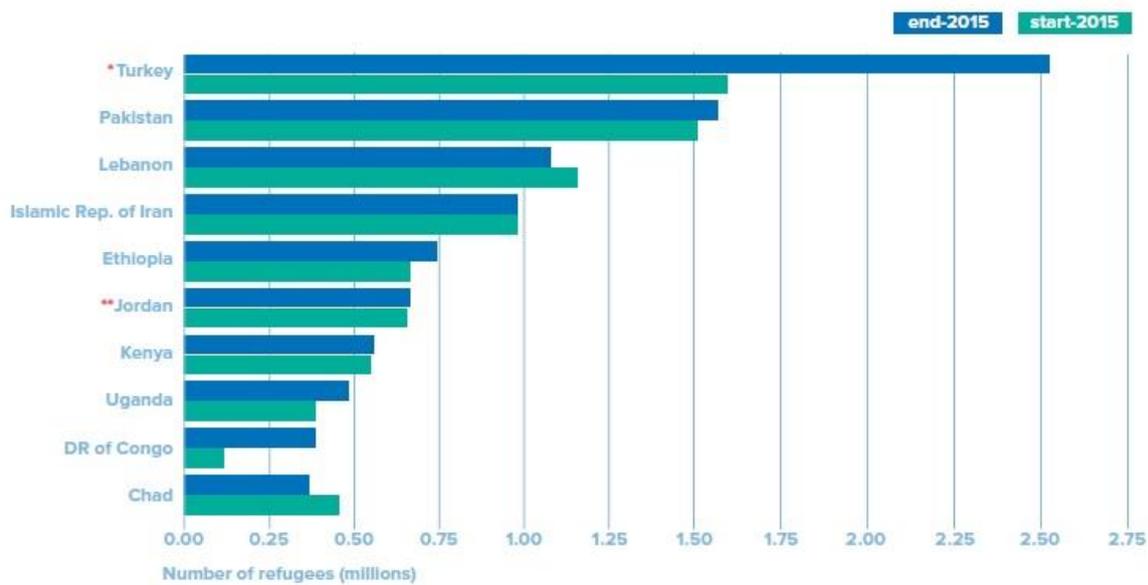
Where do refugees come from? In 2014, there was a shift in the global distribution of refugees. While before the largest numbers came from Asia, now the region producing the most refugees globally is the [Middle East](#). There were more than 4.9 million Syrian refugees registered by the end of 2015, and 6.6 million internally displaced. The majority of them have sought asylum in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. A large number of refugees still come from Afghanistan, a situation which has hardly changed for more than three decades. In 2015, there were 2.7 million Afghan refugees, primarily in Pakistan and Iran. According to UNHCR, 58 percent of refugees come from 10 countries.

Major source countries of refugees | 2014 - 2015 (end-year)



Graph comes from the UNHCR Global Trends Report

Major refugee-hosting countries | 2014 - 2015 (end-year)



Graph comes from the UNHCR Global Trends Report

* Refugee figure for Syrians in Turkey is a Government estimate.

** Includes 33,300 Iraqi refugees registered with UNHCR in Jordan. The Government estimates the number of Iraqis at 400,000 individuals at the end of March 2015. This includes refugees and other categories of Iraqis.

Where are refugees going? Eighty-six percent of refugees reside in developing regions. Lebanon hosts the largest per capita refugee population in the world, with nearly 25 percent of its population comprised of Syrian refugees.

Where are the internally displaced persons? More than 40.8 million of the 65.3 million forcibly displaced persons are IDPs. The majority of IDPs displaced by conflict are in Africa (DRC, Nigeria, [Sudan](#), [South Sudan](#) and Somalia), Asia (Pakistan and Afghanistan), [the Middle East \(Iraq, Syria, and Yemen\)](#) and Latin America (Colombia). While 201,400 IDPs were fortunate enough to be able to return home last year, many millions more people were newly displaced inside their countries.

The Philosophy

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organisation [with a mission to accompany, serve and advocate](#) on behalf of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, who rank among the world's poorest. JRS recognises refugees as companions. JRS teams work with and for refugees, focusing on the dignity of each individual.

In addition to staff employed by JRS across the world, 4,400 refugees work alongside local and international staff as cultural mediators, counsellors, teachers and school managers, among other positions. Many JRS staff members work on a voluntary basis, including Jesuits and members of other religious congregations. Services are provided to refugees regardless of race, ethnic origin or religious belief.



Accompaniment. Refugees are companions, not the anonymous recipients of handouts. In many cases, JRS supports refugees as soon as they are displaced and [accompanies them until they return home](#). It is the constant presence of staff among refugees that help teams understand how best to serve them. Accompaniment is central to the work of JRS, and its services extend from the needs of refugees.

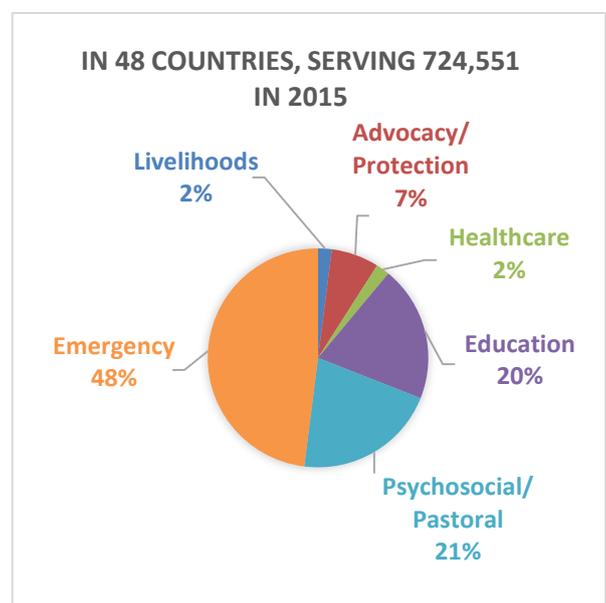
Advocacy. JRS is also very much concerned with advocacy and human rights work. Giving refugees a voice, empowering them to claim their rights, addressing the root causes of forced displacement and striving to change unjust policies are fundamental to its work. This involves ensuring that refugees are afforded their full rights while in exile and during repatriation as guaranteed by the [1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees](#) and working to strengthen the protection afforded to IDPs.

Often implemented in partnership with others, JRS advocacy includes legal casework, awareness-raising and lobbying governments and intergovernmental agencies at the national and international level, for example through participation in international campaigns and coalitions or through membership of international fora, such as the UN Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC). All JRS advocacy arises from its direct relationship with refugees which gives it international credibility.

Aware that it is rare for one organisation alone to achieve major policy changes, JRS cooperates with other groups on a local, national, regional and international level. JRS is founding member of four international coalitions: [the International Campaign to Ban Landmines](#), [Cluster Munitions Coalition](#), [International Detention Coalition](#) and the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, which formed [Child Soldiers International](#). Furthermore, JRS is an active member of the [International Campaign to Stop Rape and Gender Violence in Conflict](#), particularly in Burma, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya. JRS teams also work closely with other partner agencies and institutions on a range of issues, including the Syrian conflict.

Service. JRS programmes are found in 48 countries, providing assistance to: refugees in camps and cities, individuals displaced within their own countries, asylum seekers in cities, and to [those held in detention centres](#). The programmes are located in the following regions around the world:

- **Asia Pacific:** Australia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand
- **Eastern Africa:** Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda
- **Europe:** Belgium, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Macedonia, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom
- **Great Lakes:** Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo
- **Latin American and the Caribbean:** Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela
- **Middle East and North Africa:** Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey
- **North America:** Canada, USA
- **South Asia:** Afghanistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka
- **Southern Africa:** Angola, Malawi, South Africa, Zimbabwe
- **West Africa:** Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad



A Needs-Driven Assessment Process

Refugees are displaced by crises, persecution and injustice, yet that does not render their situation temporary. The average displaced person is displaced for 17 years. Unfortunately, as attention to these protracted crises diminishes, refugees fade from the headlines. A holistic response requires a recognition that their needs will change overtime. Humanitarian responses to forced displacement are therefore not uniform. Rather, they are diverse and dynamic, responding to the needs of those displaced one week ago to families displaced decades ago with children born in camps and never knowing life otherwise. Based on dialogue with partner organisations and refugees, JRS always conducts thorough needs assessments before engaging in action. JRS services are responsive to present reality: they evolve, adapt and always strive to place the fundamental dignity of the human person at the centre.

724,551 people served

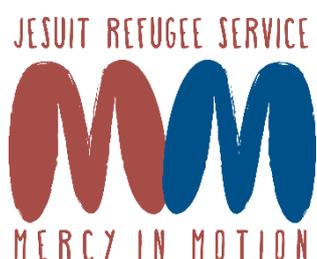
Short-term. [Emergency relief](#) comprises the largest portion (48 percent) of the services provided by JRS. Contemporary crises in countries such as the Central African Republic, [South Sudan](#) and [Syria](#) displace millions and require significant allocations of resources for emergency relief. While necessary, this is not always efficient nor sustainable. [Few large aid agencies have access in Syria](#), consequently too many people fall through the cracks. Present in the country since 2008, [JRS helps displaced Syrians](#) thanks to its strong local links. More than 600 Christian and Muslim staff and volunteers work with JRS to coordinate and deliver emergency relief. In Aleppo, for example, the JRS field kitchen provided meals to more than 51,000 people last year.

Medium-term. In the aftermath of crises, JRS provides medium-term support, including [psychosocial support](#) (21 percent), legal protection (7 percent) and healthcare (2 percent). These programmes help populations to recover and heal from past trauma. JRS counselling, therapy and sports activities help over 153,071 refugees to heal from trauma and to recover from despair. When asked to do so, JRS engages in Catholic liturgical and pastoral ministry too.

Long-term. JRS recognises that it cannot ignore long-term needs of displaced populations and acknowledges [education](#) as the primary means for rebuilding communities and preventing future crises. In most countries, state policies, overcrowding and language barriers hinder the access of refugee and migrant children to school, excluding many from educational opportunities and marginalising others without sufficient support.

Education and vocational training help [restore some semblance of normality](#) in the lives of refugees, who have often lost every other form of stability. Education [provides protection](#) to children who would otherwise be at risk of recruitment by armed groups. Training creates opportunities for displaced persons to regain hope for a better future and rebuild their lives.

Only 25 percent of refugee children go to secondary school and less than one percent of refugee adults have access to [tertiary education](#). Girls are especially disadvantaged. JRS reaches **141,333 children, young people and adults in programmes spanning kindergarten to university**, as well as [special education, adult literacy, teacher training and school reconstruction](#). Furthermore, JRS promotes self-reliance. Building on the skills of refugees and assessing local market needs, JRS provides job training and tools, makes loans available and helps set up small businesses. This helps refugees to restore their dignity, integrate locally and support themselves.



242,000 refugees to receive access to education by 2020

For this reason, over the next five years, JRS will re-focus on education as its primary service provided. With its [Global Education Initiative](#), JRS aims to provide [100,000 additional refugee children and youth with access to education by the year 2020](#), reaching a total of 242,000 served through education projects.

The [Mercy in Motion](#) fundraising and awareness-raising campaign was launched on 8 December 2015 with the Holy Year of Mercy, with the goal of raising \$35 million to fund the Global Education Initiative. Endorsing the Mercy in Motion campaign in November 2015, Pope Francis said, "to give a child a seat in school is the best gift you can give."

Compliance

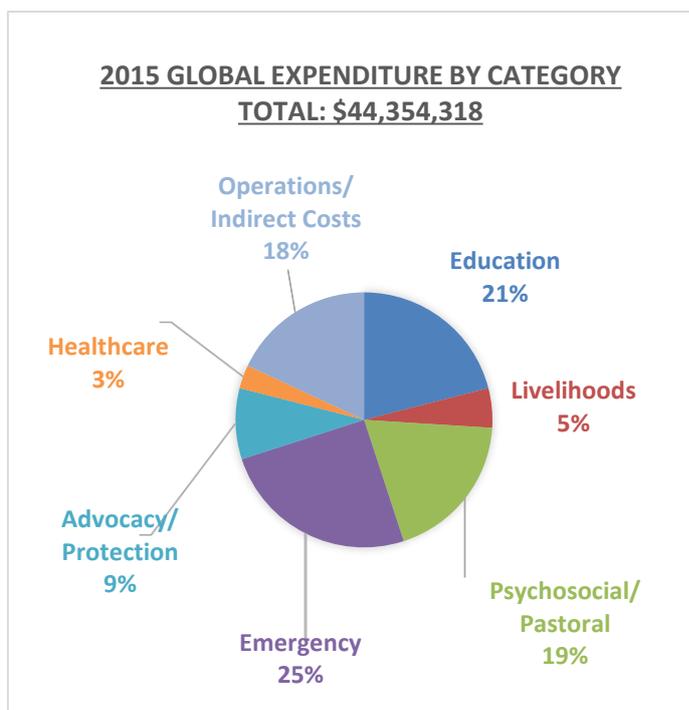
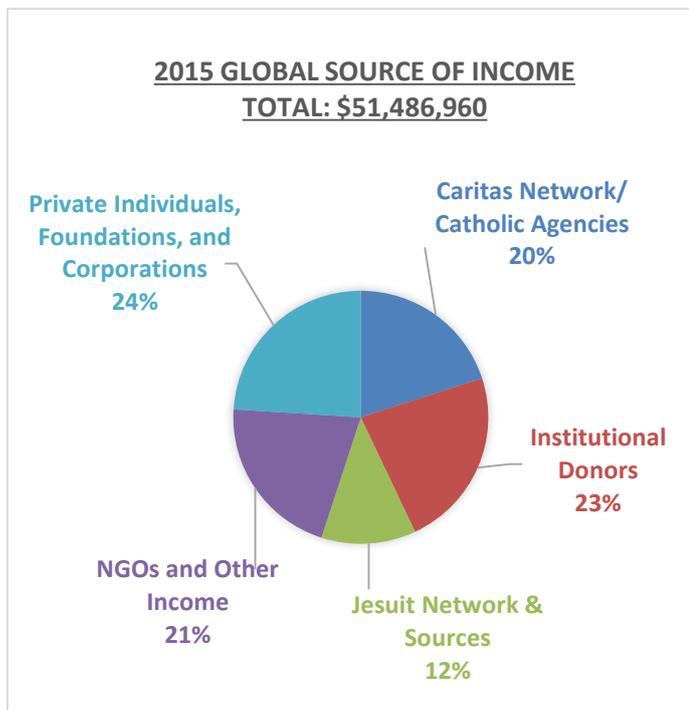
Projects are planned, executed and monitored using standard financial and programmatic templates and procedures. Local, national, regional and international staff ensure that JRS adheres to high standards of accountability and transparency.

Adherence to the JRS Financial Controls Policy and Procedures seeks to minimise fraud and wastage within the organisation. The separation of staff responsibilities, designed to guarantee transparency in JRS, is the cornerstone of this policy. Each expenditure requires the approval of at least two signatories.

The authorisation of purchases, and small loans and grants, as well as the approval of reconciliation statements, is undertaken by two distinct individuals. In addition, project directors undertake periodic reviews of a sample of financial transactions to ensure probity.

JRS keeps an up-to-date register of fixed assets, depreciated at 25 percent of current value on an annual basis. Organisation vehicles are properly maintained and insured, and a vehicle logbook is kept. Staff record the purchases of all non-capital materials (stock items) and undertake reconciliation statements on a quarterly basis. For large one-off purchases, staff are required to obtain one quote for expenditures in excess of 100 US dollars and three independent quotes for those in excess of 500 US dollars.

To ensure consistency through the organisation, authorised regional office staff liaise with the international finance coordinator in the creation of new transaction codes. All anonymous donations in excess of 5,000 US dollars are verified to prevent banking errors and ensure compliance with current regulatory requirements regarding the international transfers of funds.



Reporting

Monitoring is a continuous process that provides on-going information on progress made towards achieving specific objectives. This includes the processes of: collection, analysis, recording, reporting and evaluation in accordance with pre-determined output and outcome indicators.

Every month, the regional finance officer prepares an income and expenditure report for the projects in the region and sends it to the country office. There, the country director together with the finance officer analyse the report. Expenditure on a budget line by project directors may not exceed estimated costs by more than five percent without approval by the country director. Both the regional director and international programmes and finance coordinators must approve any further variance.

Regional programmes and finance staff are responsible for the production of half-year and annual narrative reports, and income and expenditure reports. The six-month report is sent to the country and project staff to be reviewed, and then to the international finance coordinator for approval. Before the [annual report](#) for a project can be finalised, thirteen audit schedules must be completed, ensuring material amendments, which occur as part of the year-end process (i.e. exchange rate movements), are incorporated. All JRS projects – including international, regional, and country offices – are subjected to the review by external auditors.

The Challenge Ahead

In a message on the 30th anniversary of the foundation of JRS, Jesuit Superior General, Fr Nicolas Adolfo SJ, summed up its impact on the lives of all touched by the organisation and offered some thoughts on its future direction.

“We wanted to help, but in the end, we realised that those whom we served and with whom we served taught us so much more and changed us deeply. Finally, together we thank the Lord because the history of the past 30 years is not simply a record of accomplishments, but perhaps even more deeply, a tapestry of many enduring friendships and partnerships in the mission...the world of displaced persons that JRS desires to serve is rapidly changing.

Since the Vietnamese boat people first inspired Fr Arrupe's response of compassion on behalf of the Society, many new forms of displacement, many new experiences of vulnerability and suffering have emerged ...victims of natural and environmental disasters; those who lose their lands and homes because of the world's hunger for minerals and resources; the increasing number of [urban refugees](#) just to name a few. How can JRS promote both the spirit and the structures of Ignatian freedom to respond with agility to these new calls upon our compassion?"

"How can JRS better build participatory communities? The long tradition of depending on the help of others might hinder those we serve from taking responsibility for their own needs. To help people do the right thing, without depending on someone from outside, who can do it better and faster, will need much detachment and patience; but in the long run, it will be more effective. We want to respond to needs, certainly. But how can we build something more lasting, something that strengthens the humanity of those for whom we work? How can we help them experience and move towards reconciliation, the healing of deep wounds often connected with violent displacement, so that communities of peace can emerge?"



"[Hospitality](#) is that deeply human and Christian value that recognises the claim that someone has, not because he or she is a member of my family or my community or my race or my faith, but simply because [he or she is a human being who deserves welcome and respect](#). It is the virtue of the Good Samaritan, who saw in the man by the roadside, not a member of another race, but a brother in need. It is a value that you in JRS know is being eroded in today's world, in culture and policies, because so many are fearful of 'the other'. Many are closing their borders and their hearts, in fear and resentment, to those who are different." In this thirty-sixth anniversary year of 2016, the hope of JRS –someday – to become redundant is more forlorn than ever.

The outbreak of civil war in Syria in 2011 and the existing local presence of JRS within Syria, serving Iraqi refugees, has become an unexpected 'asset'. JRS, as the implementing partner of massive international effort (both UNHCR- and international NGO-led), provides immediate relief for internally displaced Syrians, as well Syrian refugees in the neighbouring countries of Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt in particular.

This effort within the Middle East has led to a massive scaling up of immediate and shorter-term relief work within JRS. More than a third of the 2015 annual budget was related to the Middle East, with almost another third in Africa. After four years of war in Syria, public attention and concern about the civilian tragedy is waning. It has become another protracted conflict with multiple complexities. The needs of ordinary people living in Syria have all but been forgotten by the world's media. However, organisations like JRS are trying to help the displaced of this conflict recover and keep hope alive.

The longer-term human and psychological needs of displaced persons call for more sustainable and specific solutions. The predominance of children within refugee populations creates a human crisis of far-reaching consequences, such as [the 'lost generation' of Syrian refugee children](#), most without access to education since 2011. Public funding alone is insufficient, particularly to meet medium to longer term needs.

More private funding – from both organisations and individuals – is needed to fill the gap. Hearing the ['voice of the displaced'](#) takes on greater urgency. It is only in this way that more people will engage and participate in the JRS mission to 'accompany, serve and advocate' on behalf of refugees. Understanding our common humanity is recognition that responding to refugees is truly ['everybody's challenge'](#).

20 June 2016